

FINE
ROUGH ENGLISH DIAMOND:

GEORGE CRUIKSHANK
1792-1878



Geo. Cruikshank

AN EXHIBITION AT THE OBERLIN COLLEGE LIBRARY
MARCH 10 to MAY 1, 1992

A FINE ROUGH ENGLISH DIAMOND: GEORGE CRUIKSHANK 1792-1878

This small exhibition honoring George Cruikshank on the 200th anniversary of his birth spotlights his work as a book illustrator. Emerita Director of Libraries Eileen Thornton's gift in 1991 of two first editions of charming works by Cruikshank are, along with the birthday celebration, the motivation for the display. The four pamphlets which comprise *The Fairy Library* are housed in a beautiful leather covered decorated box as is the tiny pull-out accordion pleated story of *The Toothache*. Miss Thornton's and Cruikshank's whimsicality and wry sense of humor are apparent in these little creations.

The college library has only a small collection of first editions containing works by Cruikshank among which are *Oliver Twist* and *Memoirs of Robert William Elliston, Comedian*. Later editions of some books he illustrated are exhibited but also collected nearby for browsing.

The Allen Memorial Art Museum has kindly loaned a drawing and a print of the design Cruikshank made for the frontispiece to Thomas Keightley's *The Fairy Mythology* which is shown in a later edition.

Cruikshank was born on September 27, 1792 and died on February 1, 1878. During this long life he drew/ etched/ engraved over 3,000 pictures. His father and older brother were illustrators and caricaturists but he far surpassed them in talent and eventually in fame. He started drawing as a child and often helped his father, who was an alcoholic, complete commissions. Because he never had formal art lessons, his treatment of animals, and on occasion, the human body is awkward. Nevertheless he achieved great success as a caricaturist and illustrator of broadsides and books. Today, he is best remembered for the latter and some critics even claim that the works of lesser known authors which he illustrated have retained readers more for his illustrations than for the text.

Like other famous illustrators he drank heavily, but became a Teetotaler about the middle of the century and spent most of the rest of his life drawing and publishing broadsides and pamphlets which decried the evil of drinking. Most of this output is considered hack work. At his best, from 1820 to 1850, he was a droll, whimsical, fanciful, clever, amusing and insightful artist.

I would like to thank Anne Moore and Joan Elisabeth Reid of the Allen Memorial Art Museum and Lenore Horner, Special Collections student assistant, for their assistance.

Dina Schoonmaker
Special Collections
March, 1992

GEORGE CRUIKSHANK'S FAIRY LIBRARY
London, David Bogue, 1853.

- I. HOP O' MY THUMB AND THE SEVEN-LEAGUE BOOTS
- II. JACK AND THE BEANSTALK
- III. CINDERELLA AND THE GLASS SLIPPER
- IV. PUSS IN BOOTS

This charming series was donated to the library by Emerita Librarian Eileen Thornton in 1991.

Around 1850 George Cruikshank, after a productive but heavy drinking youth and manhood, became a temperance crusader and supposedly the quality of his work declined dramatically. However, the pictures in these booklets contradict this assertion.

Charles Dickens took exception to the emendations and editorial license Cruikshank took with the texts of these fairy tales to convert them into temperance stories and humorously chided him in his journal, Household Words in an article called "Frauds on the Fairies".

"...Mr. George Cruikshank. That incomparable artist is, of all men, the last who should lay his exquisite hand on fairy text. In his own art he understands it so perfectly, and illustrates it so beautifully, so humorously, so wisely, that he should never lay down his etching needle to "edit" the Ogre, to whom with that little instrument he can render such extraordinary justice. But, to "editing" Ogres, and Hop-o'-my-thumbs, and their families, our dear moralist has in a rash moment taken, as a means of propagating the doctrines of Total Abstinence, Prohibition of the sale of spiritous liquors, Free Trade, and Popular Education...

Now it makes not the least difference to our objections whether we agree or disagree with our worthy friend, Mr. Cruikshank, in the opinions he interpolates upon an old fairy story. Whether good or bad in themselves, they are, in that relation, like the famous definition of a weed: a thing growing up in a wrong place. He has not greater moral justification in altering the harmless little books than we should have in altering his best etchings..."

Then Dickens proceeded to rewrite *Cinderella* as edited by someone with a different axe to grind.

Cruikshank responded in *Cinderella* with a note "To the Public" informing them that Hop o' my Thumb had written a letter in answer to Dickens showing some of his "absurd mistakes" which was printed by Bogue for one Penny. In *Puss in Boots* he defended himself both to children and their parents and reprinted Hop o' my Thumb's letter as it was no longer available for sale. He wrote

"... when I began the illustrations for this "Fairy Library"... [I] had not any intention to make any alterations ... but upon frequently referring to the text ... so as thoroughly to understand the work, ... I discovered tht there were some parts of this Fairy literature that required, as I thought, a little pruning; but I found so much difficulty in cutting out the objectionable parts, so as to leave it readable, that I decided upon re-writing the whole, and in doing this I certainly *did* introduce some of my "doctrines" ..."

He then referred to Shakespeare and Walter Scott as examples who had rewritten well known tales to suit their own purposes.

Mayhew, Horace

THE TOOTHACHE, Imagined by Horace Mayhew, and Realized by George Cruikshank.
London, D. Bogue, [1849].

Hand colored illustrations.

Gift of Eileen Thornton, Emerita Director of Libraries

HOUSEHOLD WORDS. A Weekly Journal. Conducted by Charles Dickens. Volume VIII.
New York, McElrath and Barker, 1854

"Frauds on the Fairies" is on pages 97-100 of no. 184, the March issue.

Cruikshank, George

SKETCH FOR THE FRONTISPIECE OF THOMAS KEIGHTLEY'S
THE FAIRY MYTHOLOGY, 1850

Pencil and watercolor. Friends of Art Fund 73.11

On loan from the Allen Memorial Art Museum.

Cruikshank, George

FRONTISPIECE FOR THOMAS KEIGHTLEY'S
THE FAIRY MYTHOLOGY

Etching. Friends of Art Fund 73.10

On loan from the Allen Memorial Art Museum.

Keightley, Thomas

THE FAIRY MYTHOLOGY, ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE ROMANCE AND SUPERSTITION OF VARIOUS
COUNTRIES;

London, George Bell & Sons, 1878.

The etched frontispiece appeared first in the 1850 edition published by H.G. Bohn in London.

THE COMIC ALMANACK; AN EPHEMERIS IN JEST AND EARNEST, CONTAINING MERRY TALES,
HUMOROUS POETRY, QUIPS, AND ODDITIES By Thackeray, Albert Smith, Gilbert
A. Beckett, ...With many hundred illustrations by George Cruikshank and other
artists. 1st-2d series.; 1835-1853.

London, Chatto and Windus, [1878?].

Only a ghost of the original illustrations is apparent in this inexpensive reprint.

Gift of Mrs. Mary B. Ingham

Inglis, H. D.

RAMBLES IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF DON QUIXOTE...with illustrations by George Cruikshank.

London, Whittaker and Co., 1837.

Our copy has, unfortunately, lost all the illustrations except the title vignette, shown here, and the tail piece.

AINSWORTH'S MAGAZINE: A Miscellany of Romance, General Literature, & Art. Edited by William Harrison Ainsworth. Illustrated by George Cruikshank. Vol. IV.

London, John Mortimer, 1843

As can be seen from the photocopy of a page which appeared on the verso of the title page to the November issue, Cruikshank left Bentley's, having quarreled with him (as he did with most of his employers) and joined Ainsworth. This volume contains 14 full page illustrations on steel to three different novels. The picture shown illustrates *John Manesty* by William Maginn.

THE TRAGICAL COMEDY OR COMICAL TRAGEDY OF PUNCH AND JUDY with an introduction by Charles Hall Grandgent and illustrations by George Cruikshank.
Cambridge, Washburn & Thomas, 1925.

The original edition with text by John Payne Collier appeared in 1828. The illustrations in this edition are poor reproductions of the originals. However, the explanation of how the pictures were taken down included at the end of this book is of interest. Cruikshank wrote

"Having been engaged by Mr. Powett, the publisher, to give various scenes represented in the street performances of 'Punch and Judy', I obtained the address of the Proprietor and Performer of that popular Exhibition. He was an elderly Italian, of the name of Piccini, whom I remembered from Boyhood ... Having made arrangements for a Morning Performance, one of the window-frames on the first floor of the public-house was taken out, and the stand or Punch's Theatre was hauled into the Club-room. Mr. Payne Collier (who was to write the description), the publisher, and myself, formed the audience; as the performance went on, I stopped it at the most interesting parts to sketch the Figures, whilst Mr. Collier noted down the dialogue; and thus the whole is a faithful copy and description of the various scenes represented by the Italian..."

Gift of Mrs. Kirk L. Cowdery

THE LOVING BALLAD OF LORD BATEMAN [by] Charles Dickens and W.M. Thackeray.
London, J.M. Dent & Sons, 1969.

This slight volume first appeared in 1839 with the title page shown here.
From the "Note" by Leslie C. Staples to our modern edition:

"The authorship of this 'little jeu d'esprit',...was the subject of argument for years, until in 1938, some letters of Dickens to George Cruikshank turned up...Dickens was delighted with Cruikshank's work;...he said 'You never did anything like those etchings - never'."

Dickens, Charles

THE ADVENTURES OF OLIVER TWIST; OR THE PARISH BOY'S PROGRESS

with twenty-four illustrations on steel, by George Cruikshank. A new edition, revised and corrected.

London, Bradbury & Evans, 1846.

The first edition appeared serially in Bentley's Miscellany and then as a "triple-decker", i.e. in three volumes. The illustrations were touched up for this edition, which was first issued in 10 monthly parts, by darkening the backgrounds and some other small changes.

Some of Cruikshank's most renowned images were made for *Oliver Twist* including the haunting image of 'Fagin in the condemned Cell'. One of the pictures Cruikshank proposed was vetoed by Dickens but appeared in the earliest magazine issues. It is the "Fireside" plate showing Oliver and Rose Maylie in the future. Dickens insisted that the plate be redrawn and "Rose Maylie and Oliver" gazing on the tomb of Oliver's mother was substituted. The photocopy of the original plate is from the Oxford 1966 edition of the Clarendon Dickens as is the cover Cruikshank designed in 1846 for the monthly parts from which our edition has been bound.

Gift of J. Stanton McLaughlin

Raymond, George

MEMOIRS OF ROBERT WILLIAM ELLISTON COMEDIAN

London, John Mortimer, 1845

This "extra illustrated" edition has hundreds of additional pictures inserted making a two volume work into one of six volumes. The original volume I was illustrated by Cruikshank, volume II by 'Phiz' (Hablot Browne). However all but two of the volumes contain Cruikshank prints of famous people connected to the theater.

Gift of Relief Holbrook Fund

Fielding, Henry

THE HISTORY OF AMELIA with illustrations by George Cruikshank. In two volumes. London, James Cochran and Co., 1832.

This edition is part of Roscoe's Novelist's Library which appeared in 19 volumes of which seventeen were illustrated by Cruikshank. The illustrations are hand colored.

Gift of Ford E. Curtis, Class of 1918

Hone, William

THE EVERY-DAY BOOK; OR EVERLASTING CALENDAR OF POPULAR AMUSEMENTS...for Daily Use and Diversion.

London, Hunt and Clarke, 1826 and 1827.

There are almost a dozen Cruikshank prints among the hundreds in these two volumes.

Dickens, Charles

SKETCHES BY BOZ ILLUSTRATIVE OF EVERY-DAY LIFE AND EVERY-DAY PEOPLE...with 56 illustrations by George Cruikshank and Phiz

New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911

This edition of the complete works of Dickens contains the original illustrations for this set. Cruikshank illustrated only two of Dickens books because of artistic disagreements and his own irascibility. The image for "Public Dinners" includes portraits of Dickens and Cruikshank, the former on the left and the latter on the right behind the two portly men leading the children.

Gift of the Smith Baker Memorial Library

THE LONDON AND WESTMINSTER REVIEW. October, 1839-March 1840. American Edition.

New York, Jemima M. Mason (late Lewer), 1840.

This journal was edited by William M. Thackeray. In the June 1840 number he wrote a lengthy article praising George Cruikshank and describing his work in detail. Thackeray illustrated several of his own books and considered himself an artist as well as a writer. He concludes:

"Look at one of Mr. Cruikshank's works, and we pronounce him an excellent humourist. Look at all, his reputation is increased by a kind of geometrical progression; as a whole diamond is a hundred times more valuable than the hundred splinters into which it might be broken would be.

A fine rough English diamond is this about which we have been writing."

Thackeray was one of the few people who remained friends with the difficult and often irascible Cruikshank for a lifetime.

THE UNIVERSAL SONGSTER; OR, MUSEUM OF MIRTH...*embellished with a ... frontispiece and 29 wood-cuts designed by George and Robert Cruikshank, and engraved by J.R. Marshall.*

London, George Routledge and Sons, 1878.

Originally issued from 1825-1828 in eighty-four weekly numbers of 16 pages each with three etched frontispieces and and eighty four woodcut illustrations, about a third by George and the rest by his brother Robert.

Cohn, Albert M.

GEORGE CRUIKSHANK: A CATALOGUE RAISONNE OF THE WORK EXECUTED DURING THE YEARS 1806-1877...

London, From the Office of "The Bookman's Journal", 1924.

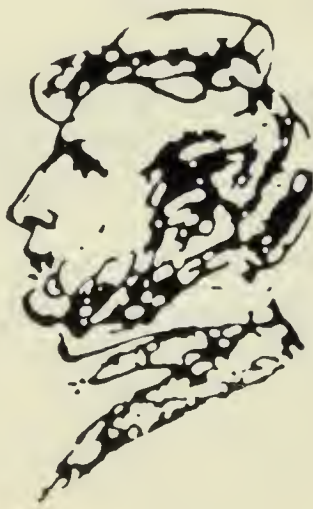
The size of Cohn's catalog indicates the remarkable fecundity of George Cruikshank. It lists 863 books he illustrated (not the illustrations, but the books which almost always included multiple pictures), and 1,250 etchings, lithographs and woodcuts, separately issued.

There are no doubt numerous prints and illustrations which Cohn did not know about, but the 2,114 included here create a remarkable testimonial to a hard working man.

PUNCH.

London, Punch, 1878.

Cruikshank's obituary appeared in the February 9, 1878 issue.



Geo. Cruikshank

